

AGENDA: February 4, 2003

3.1

CATEGORY: New Business

DEPT.: City Manager

TITLE: Position Opposing Potential Closure of
Springer Elementary School

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a position in opposition to the potential closure of Springer Elementary School and convey this position to the Los Altos School District.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact directly associated with the approval of the above-listed recommendations. However, the City of Mountain View expends funds on a quarterly basis to fertilize and aerate the playing fields at Springer School. The School District is also expected to commence playing field renovations at Springer School in mid-February 2003 and the City will pay \$210,000 of the cost.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The Los Altos School District Board of Trustees has set February 10, 2003 as the potential date for deciding which of the Los Altos School District's six of seven elementary school sites will stay open for 2004 and which campus will close. In November, the district's Citizen's Advisory Committee for Finance recommended that it would not be fiscally responsible to operate seven schools. Regardless of which school is closed, it appears that redrawing of attendance boundaries and relocation of some students and families will be necessary. Currently, the board is considering all campuses for potential closure.

It is staff's understanding there are three major reasons for the closure:

1. Decreased State funding that will prevent the district from being able to afford to operate seven elementary schools.
2. The prediction that the district will become a basic aid district during the 2003-04 school year, which would mean the district could no longer accept interdistrict transfers, resulting in 250 fewer students.
3. Growth in the district slowing between now and 2008, resulting in 180 fewer resident students than were in the 1998 projection.

In making a decision about the school closure, the board is looking at four major criteria: educational impacts, which include school size, cost effectiveness, adequate facilities, teaching conditions and students' needs; district demographics, including where the students reside, what their distance is from school and major thoroughfares crossed; asset utilization, which includes school capacities and permanent versus portable classrooms, construction, cost of renovation, potential rental income and community considerations such as neighborhoods served; and the role of school sites in community activities.

The board will consider the following scenarios:

- Close Covington School and adjust sizes of existing schools to meet the criteria;
- Close Bullis School and move the entire Bullis School community to Covington School and adjust sizes to meet criteria;
- Close Loyola School and adjust sizes to meet criteria; or
- Close Springer School and adjust sizes to meet criteria.

During the 2001-02 school year, the Covington School site was renovated in anticipation of using it as a seventh elementary school. Covington is currently used as a camp school to house Springer School until the end of this school year when Springer's renovation is complete. At that point, students attending Springer School are expected to return to the renovated campus located at 1120 Rose Avenue in Mountain View. The Covington School site is located at 205 Covington Road in Los Altos. As noted above, Covington's future use is also tied to the board's decision.

It is staff's understanding, even if all six schools stayed in their current campuses, attendance boundaries would shift in order to balance the number of students at each school. Bullis-Purissima School has the fewest students with 270 and Springer School has the largest enrollment with 635 students. It is likely that some students at Springer School will be transferred to other schools regardless of the outcome of the decision regarding which school will be closed.

The City of Mountain View is concerned about the effect the closure of Springer School would have on Mountain View students. From a monetary standpoint, the City has invested time and financial resources to ensure that Springer School's playing fields are maintained. On a quarterly basis, Mountain View fertilizes, aerates and maintains the fields, as necessary, at an annual cost of \$6,000, plus City labor. The District has also recently entered into a contract to have substantial renovations made on Springer School playing field renovation

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with the City contributing \$210,000 of the total cost of \$285,000. These renovations are scheduled to begin in mid-February 2003.

Elementary school-aged Mountain View residents would be directly affected by the closure of Springer School. Springer School is the only school in the Los Altos School District located in Mountain View. Currently, approximately 400 Mountain View residents attend Springer School. If Springer School was closed, the majority of the students will be transferred to Covington School located at 205 Covington Road in Los Altos and some will be transferred to Loyola School located at 770 Berry Road in Los Altos. Springer School is 1.25 miles from Covington School and 0.91 miles from Loyola School. This change would prevent many students from walking or riding their bikes to school, placing an additional burden on their parents to arrange transportation. It will also more than likely alter the students' social and educational learning environments.

CONCLUSION

If Springer School is closed, it will negatively impact the children who attend Springer School as well as their families.

It is recommended that the Council adopt a position in opposition to the potential closure of Springer School.

PUBLIC NOTICING—Agenda posting.

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607-02-04-03M-E^